

From Jews

BETH-EL PULPIT

How Shall the American Jew Face Anti-Semitism

Sunday, November 7th, 1920

By

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5th Ave. at 76th St.

New York



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How Shall the American Jew Face Anti-Semitism

At Temple Beth-El, Fifth Ave. and 76th St., Sunday, Nov. 7th,
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By RABBI SAMUEL SCHULMAN, D. D.

Isaiah 54.17: "No weapon that is formed against thee, shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their due reward from Me, saith the Lord."

We come together to resume our Sunday Services, in times of great trial for the American Jew. We are filled with sorrow. Our pride as Americans is deeply hurt. The very love of our country and its free institutions, our very joy in American traditions, make us feel all the more humiliated by the recent manifestations of a spirit of anti-Semitism in this land, which till now, had been altogether foreign to it. At last, the slimy serpent from across the seas, has crept into our beloved country. It is true, that the large masses of the American people are totally unaffected by the poison which the Jew-baiters of the world, would infuse into the body politic of the American people, to which we rejoice to belong. It is true, that thus far, the efforts of the anti-Semites have been insidious and subterranean. As far as my observation goes, no great public newspaper has taken note of them, or treated them with any seriousness. We shall not hide from ourselves the danger that this anti-Semitic poison holds for us. But we shall not forget that we are sons and daughters of Israel, which, not for the first time, in our story, rich in suffering and in glory, was made in time of world-crises, the scapegoat for the sins of humanity. And we will not forget that we are not only Jews, but we are American Jews. We are conscious of the great privilege of being part of the American people. And we believe in the cleanness, the love of freedom, the passion for justice and the loyalty to fair play of the American spirit. We therefore must face the anti-Semitism, which a few misguided men are seeking to import into this land, with an attitude of mind and a courage of heart, worthy of our great holy heritage

as upholders of a religion, for which thousands, in the course of Jewish history, have been ready to lay down their lives. And we must face the insidious foe with a fearlessness worthy of American freemen.

We shall not become unduly excited. We shall not deal with the hideous and contemptible thing in a spirit, either of timidity, or levity, or pessimism. We are not afraid of it, and we do not consider it a subject for vain and frivolous speech-making. It will not do to fight the devil with his own fire. It will not do to indulge in personalities. For we can be assured that the skins of those who have committed themselves to the anti-Semitic agitation in this country, are very tough. Nor will we allow ourselves to be embittered, to become pessimistic. No such insults, as have been flung at us, can make us for a moment, cease to be hopeful, optimistic, or undermine our joy in the holy heritage of our American patriotism. We feel here thoroughly at home. And we know that, in warding off from ourselves the cowardly blows aimed at us, we are at the same time, protecting the integrity of the American spirit and the humanitarian character of American institutions. The way to face anti-Semitism, it seems to me, is with faith in the God of our fathers, with a dignity which is the only worthy expression of the righteousness of our cause. We must face it also with an immovable confidence in the intelligence and good will of the American people. We must meet the tragic problem, forced upon us, with our own clear and earnest thinking upon the meaning of our heritage, upon the significance of our Judaism. And we, above all, must regard what anti-Semitism can do us, with comparative indifference. Our main energy should be devoted to the moral and spiritual education of the Jewish community.

The anti-Semitism which confronts us in this land, is at present, insignificantly small in compass, and comparatively negligible in importance, though we cannot afford to disregard it. Essentially, it is an importation. It confronts us in the form of two publications, which we were astonished to see that publishers of repute, could lend themselves to spread in this land. It was a shock to our knowledge of the fair play of Americans, to observe that one publishing house in Boston,

could reproduce what bears on the face of it, all the insignia of a forged document, with respect to whose authenticity, the publishers themselves, are in doubt. This is a reproduction of the so-called Protocols of the wise men of Zion, a cryptic document, originally published in Russia in 1905, and since then, translated into English in England, and now brought to us across the seas. Any intelligent person who reads these so-called speeches, which are supposed to have been made by a secret Jewish society, sees at a glance, that they are fiction. The Russian author gives no account how they were supposed to come into his hands. They bear all the characteristics of a document manufactured, in order to bolster up the tottering power of Czarism and reaction. Jews are represented in them as conspiring to overthrow Christian civilization. They are presented as the treacherous plotters against all government. They are made hypocritically to stand for liberal ideas, only as a means of undermining all present government and authority, in order to seize the power for themselves. And all through the documents, the intimation is given that it is the Jews who are undermining the aristocracy, which, it will make Americans laugh, are upheld by the writer, as the protectors of the great masses of the people. Neither in thought nor in language, is there anything really Jewish about this document. It is a plain piece of propaganda, manufactured to instil hatred in the minds of Christian peoples, against the Jews. Another publishing house of this city has published a book entitled, "The Cause of World Unrest." This, too, bases itself on these same documents. And the argument of this book is that the Jews and the Free Masons are in a great conspiracy to achieve world-mastery. The book itself, hesitates to affirm that these documents are authentic. But there are constant insinuations that they might be taken as true. The publishers say that they "desire to point out, that while the statements presented do reflect upon the purpose and the actions of certain groups of Jews and of certain groups of Free Masons, there has been no intention of bringing accusation against the Jewish race as a whole, or against the Free Masons, as a society." With all that, we cannot hold the publishers of this volume free from the charge of having lent themselves to a propaganda against the Jew. For while this reservation is made, it is of course, apparent to any intelligent person that the net result of such

insidious charges, can only be to excite the prejudice, the suspicion and the animosity against Americans of Jewish faith. In addition to these two publications, there have been a series of articles published in an obscure provincial paper, whose financial support is derived from the well known automobile manufacturer, Mr. Ford, who, I would say in charity, has been misled into spending his money upon this futile, but hateful project, even as he was led to enter upon the Quixotic enterprise of taking the boys out of the trenches, during a world-war, which was the outburst of forces, that only a man with a great deal of self-assurance, could for one moment, imagine that he could control. I am inclined to believe that the man who gives the money to encourage such publications, is being misled, through pure ignorance, and that he is being taken advantage of. And I hope that he will wake up from the nightmare into which he has allowed himself to be betrayed, and will permit his better nature to assert itself. The whole movement, as illustrated by the publications mentioned, is quite evidently part of a conspiracy against the Jew. The charges made are laughable. They assume a stupidity on the part of the non-Jewish world, which is simply incredible. But with all that, they are damnable.

They are laughable, because to those who know history, they are merely a rehash of what has been said before. In times of world-crisis, the Jew, standing out as a conspicuous target for attack, because he is a minority, is selected to be the scapegoat, in order that the attention of the masses be deflected from whatever real evils there may exist in the political and economic conditions of the time. It is an old game, that has been played again and again, this of Jew-baiting, in order to make it appear that the Jew is the enemy of the world, and to concentrate upon him the hatred of the masses. And this coupling of the Jew with free masonry, is also not new. I know nothing about free masonry, because I am not a Mason. And I suppose the Masonic organization will be able to take care of itself. But I do know, that the idea of there being a secret power amongst the Jews, which governs Jewry all over the world, is a pure lie, made of whole cloth. If such lies did not sometimes have tragic consequences for us, we, who know the actual conditions of Jewry, would be inclined to shrug the

shoulder and laugh at them. There is no community in the world, that is so broken up into parties and fragments, that so much lacks efficient organization, as Israel. There is no Church in which there is so little central authority as exists in the Synagogue. There is no spiritual communion in which there is such free and untrammelled individualism as exists in Judaism.

True it is, that if our Jewish coreligionists suffer in any part of the world, our hearts go out to them in sympathy, and we do what we can to bring them relief. True it is, that Jews, as is natural to an oppressed and persecuted minority, will do what they can for the emancipation of their brethren in lands of oppression, and bring influence to bear, to obtain for them the essential human rights, which America guarantees to all, of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, without any prejudice or injustice, because of differences of race or creed. But when the impression is given that Jews all over the world, have a "foreign policy of their own, with a definite end in view," then it must be said, that such an opinion is either an expression of crass ignorance, or of wilful malicious distortion of the truth. I prefer to say that it is the result of ignorance. And in general, it can be asserted, that much of the prejudice against the Jew is simply the effect of ignorance. The Jews are anything but unified on so-called policies. Nor is there today, in Jewry, any clear and definite conception of the purpose of the Jew in the world. If there were such a clear conception of what the Jew stands for, the Jewish religion would be much stronger, and Jewish moral and spiritual influence would be much profounder and more fruitful. Actual Jewry is broken up into religious parties—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform. There are amongst the Jews, Rationalists and Mystics, observers of the letter and free liberal thinkers. There is the almost unbridgeable chasm between the extreme allegiance to the old, which refuses to take one step in advance, and adjust Judaism to the problems of life, and the most radical thought, which would re-interpret entirely, the fundamental principles of our faith. There is the great cleavage which runs through contemporary Jewry, between the Zionists and the anti-Zionists, between those who dream dreams of Palestine, and those whose aim is to obtain perfect equality

of rights for Jews in any land in which they may dwell, and who preach the ideal of a perfect incorporation of the Jews in the body politic, to which they belong; who maintain the doctrine that Jews are only Jews in religion, but belong whole-souledly to the respective nations, of which they are a part. There exists today, no body or agency, public or secret, which can in any way, be said to represent Jewry as a whole. The gravamen of the accusation against the Jew, is a fabric of falsehood. The burden of proof rests upon those who assert it. We are well aware that the masses can easily be misled by insinuations. But we also feel that truth, in the end, will conquer and destroy, as it has done often in our history, this baseless charge.

Such a charge assumes the stupidity of the non-Jewish world. The documents to which I have referred, present the non-Jewish world, with its statesmen, with its great leaders in finance, commerce and industry, with its zealous prophets for righteousness, with its liberal thinkers, with its self-sacrificing patriots, with its fighters for human rights—in a word, the whole of the civilization of Christendom, as secretly and unconsciously manipulated by the hand of the Jew, through free masonry, and made to play their roles as automata, of which the secret power holds the wires. This charge makes it appear that the insignificantly small number of Jews have the intellect, the ability and the world-wide power to enslave such a world. To state such a charge, is to show its ridiculousness. It is a sinister tribute, indeed, to Jewish genius, which we cannot accept. But if it were only ridiculous, we would not discuss it. It is venomous with Jew-hatred. Therefore, we must warn our fellow-citizens against the untruthful, unjust, cruel and inhuman accusation, which is being made against Jews. The Jewish genius has, indeed, given much to the world. It can fairly be stated that Western civilization is inspired by certain fundamental ideals which Hebrew Prophets, and he whom Christendom regards as more than prophet, gave to the world. But much as the Jew gave, he has also received much from the world. And it is nothing less than a calumny to accuse him of seeking to overthrow a civilization, whose soul is part of his own soul. And it is nothing less than a fanatical delusion and absurdity to say that the “worm Jacob” has the

power to gnaw at and destroy that civilization. The damnable ness of these charges consists in their subtle appeal to the latent prejudice which exists against the Jew, and which they seek to inflame into active animosity.

We must face this thing with a strong faith. The destiny of the Jew has been thus far, to witness to God in suffering. But no weapon formed against him could prosper, so as to destroy him, and no tongue that rose against him in judgment, failed of being condemned. For the suffering of the Jew means his martyred service on behalf of the Lord. Our faith is strong and indestructible, because it is a truth, not merely for the Jew, but for all men. Judaism is a message that binds men together in unity. There is utterly foreign to it, any belief or practice that makes for the separation of men in suspicion and hatred. The vital breath of the Jew is his proclamation of the Unity of God. One God implies one humanity. The religion of Israel has been the first to proclaim the brotherhood of mankind. It has disparaged any claim of racial aristocracy, by its enunciation of the truth that man is created in the image of God. Its ethics are universally human. Their central virtues are justice, as an aspiration, an ideal, in the light of which civilization is to advance, and love of the fellow-man, which is to be the driving force in men, impelling them to relieve suffering, to remove unrighteousness, and to moralize and sanctify human existence. These virtues were applied to all men, irrespective of race or creed. In every commandment in our Torah, which inculcates in us sympathy with, and commands service to the poor, the needy, the suffering and the dependent there is always included the stranger, the man of alien race. The love of neighbor includes always the love of the stranger. The vision of our Prophets was not centered in the glorification of Israel. It embraced all peoples, and foresaw the time when they would be united as one family, to do the will of their Father in heaven. And when they would pilgrim to the mountain of the Lord, and learning of His ways of righteousness, they would win peace. The Jewish religion is therefore, a religion of universal application. It is hospitable to men and women of all races. It forces none to join it. It welcomes all. Our sages have taught us to respect and honor men of any creed or race, insofar as they

walk by the light of their conscience, and have taught that the righteous of all peoples will inherit the everlasting life. Israel, bearing witness to these truths, has with infinite patience, waited for them to spread over the world. And while waiting, it has paid the price of all those who wish to walk alone, and as a minority, in accordance with what they regard as truth and as the ideal. Not all the powers of a world in arms against the Jew, seeking in every age to destroy him, prevailed against him. For Israel does not live by its own strength, but by the power of the spirit, by the idea which makes its soul, by the Divine purpose, which history reveals.

Relying on our faith, we meet these attacks with the dignity, which is the only worthy expression of the righteousness of our cause. During the last century, the lot of the Jew was materially improved in the Western World, because of the enlightenment and liberalism and democracy which spread amongst men. Yet the spirit of reaction always threatened to undo what was achieved for the Jew. And in benighted lands, even the Twentieth Century, found the Jew oppressed, robbed of his human rights, and persecuted as in the darkest years of the Middle Ages. But the spirit of truth, of justice, and of democracy cannot be resisted. Its triumphant march is as sure as is the victory of the righteousness which, because a righteous God is ruling the world, is at the heart of things. It was therefore, natural that Jews, both because of the ideals of justice and humanity which make up their religion and because of their being a minority that suffered from the oppressions of caste and privilege, found themselves in the ranks of liberalism in the last century. We have no apology to make for the champions of liberty and progress, in whose front ranks many a Jew fought for human rights. And it is equally natural that all the forces of darkness, all the selfish interests in Europe, which would fain restore mediaevalism in Church and State, should with sinister cunning, seeking to destroy all liberal thought, single out the Jew as the protagonist of liberty and progress, and playing upon racial prejudice, deceive the people, and while making the Jew the victim, really aim at re-enslaving the masses. The method is shrewd, but it is not so subtle as not to be easily understood. We are convinced that the true salvation for the Jew in the Western World, as anywhere

else, is bound up with the salvation of all men. Perfect freedom and justice for the Jew, can only come with the establishment of perfect freedom and justice for all men.

We must, however, hurl back with horror the suggestion that there is any natural union or relationship between what is called Bolshevism, with its mad excesses, in Russia to-day, and Judaism. This pulpit did not hesitate when Bolshevism first arose to speak in clear and uncompromising language its opinion of this movement. There is as much compatibility between Bolshevism and Judaism as there is between evil and good. Judaism is the very contradiction of everything that goes to make up Bolshevism. For Bolshevism violates every commandment of the Decalogue. It is an irreligious, atheistic movement. It does not believe in God. It regards all religion as a superstition. It seeks to rob men of their belief in a God, Who loves men and redeems them. It does not recognize true freedom of the individual, and therefore treats the individual's rights with contempt. It is opposed to the respect for the institution of property, which is the only safeguard of a free personality. It bears false witness against the neighbor because it refuses, judging from all reports, to permit freedom of thought and the honest expression of opinion. It is committed to the establishment, by brute force, of the rule of one element of the people, and the subjugation of the large majority that differs with it. Nothing is more dastardly than to make Jews responsible for Bolshevism because, forsooth, there may be some men, who having had Jewish mothers and bearing Jewish names are conspicuously active in the movement. These men are traitors to everything Jewish. They have trampled under foot every Jewish sanctity. There is as much in common between a real Jew and a Bolshevik, as between an enlightened, cultured Christian and a Hottentot. I know I am putting this in very strong language. But it is time that some one made this as clear and as strong as possible. We have at least the satisfaction of not having waited for anti-Semitism to cross the seas, before declaring the danger which exists for the Jew in the possibility of anti-Semitism singling out a Trotzky and his allies, as the representatives of the Jewish spirit.

We have no apology to make for the Jew's love of knowledge, of freedom, for his sympathies with the masses of the people, for his advocacy of democratic self-government. But we reject as a slander the intimation that the madness of the Bolsheviks is the machination of a secret Jewish conspiracy. The masses of the Jews in Russia are simple, law-abiding, faithful observers of their religion, and are only too glad, in accordance with the teachings of Judaism in all ages, to prove their loyalty to the fatherland. All they ask is for the rights of a free citizenship, which will enable them to show their patriotism as Jews have shown it in all Western lands. And when the madness of Bolshevism will be swept away, and a free Russia will arise, then the Jews will be found to be loyal upholders of their newly constituted nationality and government. The record of the Jew in Western lands is clear. The conflagration of the world-war has gloriously illumined it. On every battlefield, Jews laid down their lives for their country. In our own land, the Jews gave a splendid account of themselves. They gave more than their percentage of the population to the service. They had their share of positions of leadership. They got their share of honors and distinctions for heroism. Any one who insinuates that the Jew cannot be trusted for his patriotism is deliberately slandering our people.

We meet this thing with confidence in the intelligence and good-will of the American people. All we need is to warn America against the treason to its spirit, which misguided men are undertaking to foster. We can rest assured in the common sense and fair play of Americans. But we do think that the leaders of public opinion in Christendom ought to denounce the insidious attacks upon us. We believe that it is the duty of the teachers of Christianity in this country, with many of whom we work shoulder to shoulder, on behalf of every good civic cause, to speak a clear word of protest against this propaganda against the Jew. We do not doubt that when their attention is called to it, then in a spirit of righteousness and chivalry, they will tread upon the serpent, which has dared to raise its head and hiss the hatred of the European anti-Semite into the land, we, as Jews and Christians, love as the hope of mankind. We have the right to ask this of those who are

responsible for the moral education of the nation. And we do not doubt that they will rise to the opportunity.

We ourselves are called upon to remove the evil from our midst. We ourselves must make impossible any misunderstanding which is only too readily grasped at by the anti-Semite. We have been weltering in a chaos of confused ideas. Far from being organized, we are the most completely unorganized religious community. Far from being strong in union, we are weak through our dissensions. And our weakness comes from the weakness of Jewish faith. We are not as powerful and influential as we might be, despite what our enemies say, because of the loss of loyalty to the Jewish religion, which pervades our ranks. We must think clearly and become conscious of that in which alone consists our only reason for existence, as a distinct and differentiated body in the world. We must make clear to ourselves wherein the Jewish consciousness consists. We must refuse to recognize any one as Jew, who is not in some way affiliated with our religion. We must not allow any one for a moment to be our spokesman who, either in his denial of Judaism as a religion, *spurns the heritage of the fathers*, or in his championship of political and social doctrines, radically opposed to all Jewish teachings, *misrepresents* us. We must re-emphasize the principles of American Judaism, which have been clearly enough expounded, and which it is interesting to observe, the anti-Semitic literature does not like to quote. We must tell the world that we regard Judaism as a religion only, and that we claim only one kind of nationality, and that is our American nationality. We must make this American Judaism known. We spend money on many things, but we do not spend enough to enlighten the world with respect to our beliefs, to the principles by which we actually live, as Americans and Jews. And as all the signs point to the leadership in the world, of American Israel, we must hold up our ideals to the Jewry of the world so that Jews all over the world consider themselves only a religious community and refuse to be regarded as an alien, national minority group. We should, in season and out of season, *minimize race and magnify our religion*. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as a pure Jewish race. There is an historic Jewish community. There

is Israel, with an unbroken tradition of two thousand years since the destruction of the political nationality of the Jews who lived in Palestine. This historic Israel is a religious community and nothing else. To it there were admitted in the past men and women of non-Jewish blood. What is called the Jewish race to-day is very mixed. The physiognomies of Jews coming from different parts of the world testify to the fact that there has been a strong infiltration of non-Jewish blood. It is absolutely necessary for us to cease talking of the Jewish race, and to emphasize the Jewish spiritual communion. Israel has survived, not because of its racial power, but because of the ideas which kept it alive. And we should indeed unite and organize upon the basis, not of race, but of religion. So long as we tolerate the idea, in whatever attenuated a form, of a racial basis of organization we expose ourselves to the greatest misunderstandings. We provide material which, in a spirit of injustice and cruel malice, the anti-Semite pounces upon. We make ourselves responsible for those who we know are outcasts from Jewish society, because while they may claim to have so-called Jewish blood in their veins, belie by their lives, any right of claiming the glorious name of Jew. For, as our sages say, "a Jew is one who proclaims and maintains the unity of God in the presence of the world." There can be and there ought to be only one kind of Jewish brotherhood and that is brotherhood which is the "heritage of the servants of the Lord."

Lastly we should not worry too much about what the anti-Semites may do to us. What should fill us with great anxiety, is the crying indifference to Judaism as a religion, which has seized large numbers of our people. What should fill us with great concern is the injury that we ourselves are doing to our sacred heritage. What we need is, not so much a campaign against anti-Semitism. Lies will die of themselves. The healthy organism of the American people will throw off these germs which, like the anarchy which threatens to subvert American institutions by force, has been imported from abroad. The only way to render anti-Semitism futile, is by a revival of Jewish faith. What we need is a great campaign of religious education in this, the greatest Jewish community of the world. We must set our spiritual house in order. We

need to win back the thousands who have drifted away from the heritage of their fathers, and who, many of them cut off from the root of their religion, have ceased to produce its noble fruitage in character, and its fine outflowing in the graces of the spirit. If anti-Semitism, a scourge which again and again in the course of our history has made us suffer, will prove a challenge to our Jewish conscience, it will be no unmixed evil. To thy tents, O Israel, should be our battlecry. Back to the sanctuary which has been neglected by the great and the little, the classes and the masses, the leaders and the led—is the call of the crisis for us. Our only hope is in our loyalty to the everlasting God Whom, if we serve, we deserve to live, and Whom, if we forget, we deserve to perish as a people of Israel. If we serve the God of our fathers with renewed faith, with the dignity of self-reliance, with the confidence in the fairness and good-will of our fellow citizens, with a whole-souled self-consecration, then we know that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper. And every tongue that shall rise against us in judgment, shall be condemned. For our reward is certain. It is “from Me, saith the Lord.”



